

THE
SOURCE OF THE EVIL:
OR, THE
SYSTEM DISPLAYED.

ADDRESSED TO THE
GENTRY, YEOMANRY, FREEHOLDERS, AND
ELECTORS OF ENGLAND.

BY A FREEHOLDER.

LETTER II.

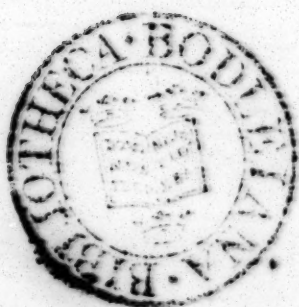
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THE
SOURCE OF THE EVIL, &c.

LETTER II.

Friends and Countrymen,

THE experiment made by the secret advisers of the Crown, in the Middlesex election, was in part attended with success. They established their precedent: the rest was to be left to time. They had brought the constitution of Parliament, and the mode of election, within the verge of their influence. *You* might in time submit to have occasional representatives appointed for you by the Crown, as it is now maintained by the advocates of the present Ministry, that you have *hereditary representatives* of its nomination.

Had their next attempt proved equally successful, the system would have been completed—I should not now have an opportunity of encouraging you to preserve your rights; you would have no rights to preserve, Providence interfered in your deliverance. The British spirit still flourished unbroken and unimpaired in the American provinces. They disdained to yield to an usurpation unknown to the Constitution of their ancestors, or to brook encroachments on

their rights, against which those ancestors had risen in arms. They resisted; and to that resistance, however you may have suffered in a diminution of wealth, commerce, and external consequence, you are indebted for all the liberty that is yet left you.

It is not necessary that I should enter into any detail of the circumstances of that fatal contest. My purpose is, to trace the steps of the Cabal in regular progression through all the transactions of the present reign. To answer this purpose, it will be sufficient to direct your attention to the immediate object for which they engaged in the American war. That object was to levy contributions on the subject without his consent; to separate the idea of Taxation and Representation; to establish the former on the manner of all arbitrary governments, and enforce it as a debt due for *protection*; to alter the ancient Constitution of each province, and arbitrarily to substitute new forms of Government without their consent, and to which they were to be compelled to yield implicit obedience.

The Cabal justly conceived it to be a very fortunate circumstance in their favour, that the experiment could be made on the extremities of the empire; on what was considered rather as dependencies, than as parts incorporated with ourselves. Success would furnish them with the means of improving their experiment. The minds of men would become habituated to the doctrine. America would furnish inexhaustible resources of influence from the numberless tribe of Placemen and Taxgatherers; and a standing army would be necessary to enforce that *unconditional submission* to which she was to be reduced.

These were the happy and prosperous days of the Cabal. The Parliament, the Nation, the ostensible Minister, all blindly lent them aid in promoting their designs. The prospect of making America bear her part in the public burdens, and of seeing this country relieved, by her means, from the load of taxes under which we groaned, produced

an universal frenzy. In the pursuit of this idle and visionary hope, the nation became incapable of listening to any other consideration; the voice of the few who opposed it was drowned in the general clamour.

I said that the offensive Minister of the day was hurried away in the stream. He felt no rubs from that influence of which his predecessors had so uniformly complained. With that openness and candour that have entitled him to the thanks of the independent characters of this country, he has himself assigned the reason. He felt it not, he said, because he supposed he was acting as it wished him to act. He was promoting its interest, while he aimed at promoting the interest of the nation.

The power and influence he has acquired, beyond what any other Minister had ever enjoyed, he then ascribed to the confidence of his Sovereign, and to the sense entertained of his services. He has lived to be undeceived. The moment his Administration ceased to be instrumental in promoting the views of the Cabal, he drew the whole weight of their indignation upon him. The moment they found that he had established a firm interest in his country: the moment they saw him followed in Parliament by a considerable body of men, independent of the Court, and not to be detached from him, from that moment Lord North became more objectionable, more hateful in their sight, than the most violent of all their opposers. Even the man whom they before *execrated*, is preferred to him; and of all the members of the late Cabinet, he is the only one to whom they publicly object.

Losses and defeats had opened your eyes to the fatal consequences of the American war. The object of which it had been so eagerly undertaken had vanished into a smoke. The nation, instead of being eased of its burden by it, was oppressed with an additional weight of taxes, which threatened a general bankruptcy. The tide of popular clamour was turned against the supporters of the war, and the discontent with-

without doors, made their way into Parliament. The fears of the Independent Gentlemen, and of those who had a stake in their country, became too powerful to be resisted by those who thrived by the public ruin, and who owed their seats in the House to the profits of the war. The Cabal saw the danger that threatened them from the defeat of their favourite measure, which had promised so very different an issue. Their exertions to ward off the blow, were proportioned to the consequences they dreaded from it. It was like parting with life. But Parliament, true, in this instance, to your wishes, was resolute. It carried its Remonstrances to the Throne, and they who stood behind it had not *then* a Minister of such temper and principles as they have now brought forward and adopted. Lord North, against whom so many artifices are employed to prejudice and inflame you, disdained to act the part, which Mr. Pitt, whom you are directed to reverence, is at this moment acting. He had prosecuted the American war, and continued in Administration, because he had been encouraged to prosecute the one, and continue in the other, by a decided majority of your Representatives. The instant that same majority appeared as decided in their condemnation, he put an end to his Administration, as a measure which he knew would of course put an end to the war.

The threats and soothing, the denunciation of lasting resentment, on the promises of boundless and eternal confidence which were conveyed to him by the agents of the Cabal, could not shake his resolution! They were not able to prevail on him to hold a station which he could not retain without violating every maxim of constitutional government. He chose to expose himself to the vengeance of the Court, whose implacability he foresaw, and to the resentment of that powerful body of men, whom long rooted prejudices, and the sense of the national distresses which were attributed to him as their sole author, had inflamed against him, rather than lead himself to the support of an Admini-

Administration in which the Representatives of the People of England declared they had no confidence. His measures had proved unfortunate, but he was conscious to himself that his intentions had ever been right. He had failed in promoting the successes of his country; he was incapable of lending his assistance to the subversion of its Constitution. The one might be recovered,—the other, once materially injured, could not be restored without a dangerous convulsion in the State. The same noble disinterestedness which within these few days induced him to relinquish every prospect of *returning* to office, rather than oppose the general wish of restoring peace and quiet to this distracted country, induced him then to *retire from* office, when he thought that by *retiring* he could allay the public fears. This will be his praise, when the ingratitude of men whom he enriched by his favours, when the clamour of faction in which these men are the loudest and most eager to join, when the virulence of the present obstinate retainers of that power which he nobly disdains, will be despised and forgotten. His most inveterate enemies, witnesses of this patriotic conduct, have already done him justice. He will receive, I make no doubt, equal justice from you.

No sooner had Lord North withdrawn his credit and name from his Administration, than it dissolved of course, and the Cabal was reduced to the same extremities which had before compelled them to give way to the Ministry of Lord Rockingham. But at the period I am describing to you, they found an immediate resource, which reconciled them, in some sort, to the mortifying check they received by the return of that ever-to-be-lamented Nobleman and his friends to office. In the person of Lord Shelburne (a name now consigned, as if by general consent of all parties, to universal oblivion) they found the most fit instrument for their purposes, which their knowledge of the characters of public men had, *at that time*, ever presented to them.

It was not that they could think of admitting this state
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empire amongst them as a principle. However ambitious he showed himself of that distinction, they could not rely on him even in such a cause as theirs. They resolved, therefore, to manage him at his own weapons. They flattered, they amused, and they deceived him. Under an appearance of the fullest confidence they employed him in arranging the new Ministry. They embosomed themselves to him, as far as it was safe, in conversations, which, for once true to his trust, because he had an interest in being true to it, he refused to communicate to those of his intended colleagues, on the credit of whose popularity the Ministry was ostensibly forming. His conduct proved that they knew their man. In conjunction with an * associate, equal in zeal with himself, but superior in abilities, and more cordially trusted, their most sanguine expectations were gratified. He proposed measures which he knew would never be adopted. He opposed and thwarted whatever were designed for the public good. He daily gave the most evident and convincing proofs of a secret communication with some power, known to the majority of the Cabinet only, by the dissensions and divisions which he and his associate caused there. He at last drove those of the Ministry, who were obnoxious to his employers, into a determination of resigning, and withdrawing themselves from a situation, in which they must have disgraced themselves, without being able to serve their country.

This determination was only *hastened* by the death of Lord Rockingham. Had it pleased Providence to have spared to his country that great and good man (great chiefly, because he was good) his friends would have had his sanction and concurrence, in separating themselves from Lord Shelburne, as they did on his decease. But unfortunately that event produced this difference, that had he lived

to have led the way in the measure, much happier consequences would have resulted from it to the country. By his death the ties were loosened that held the great body of the Whigs together. Before the distinguished characters, who, from the similarity of their virtues, and their attachment to your interests, have succeeded to his influence, could recover from the fear and dismay into which this stroke of Providence had plunged them, the weak were tampered with and seduced; the *sordid* (for in all great public bodies of men such will be found) were bribed and brought over; and the *ambitious*, disappointed in their expectations of succeeding to the place he held among the Whigs, and no longer awed by his discerning, inflexible integrity, gladly seized a pretext for retaining that power, the love of which, it is now evident, was the sole cause of the intemperate, and oftentimes indecent zeal, with which they had joined him in opposing the system of Court Influence*.

And here it is well worthy of your attention to observe, that the very men, who, in all the struggles that have been maintained against the *system* during the period which I have been describing to you, were for going lengths which its present steady opposers thought too violent, and to which they refused to proceed, are they who now defend the legality, and even the necessity of that *influence* with a frenzy of zeal, which its old supporters scarce can venture to countenance. Nay, those of them, who, in their furious invectives against its abettors, often found a pretext for offering personal indignities to the Sovereign, are now become, not only its most avowed and boldest, but even its most *successful* champion†. So true is it, that in the eyes of the Court,

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* The D— of R—d retained his place of Master General of the Ordnance, the place he now fills.

† The person here principally alluded to has declared in Parliament, that the measures now pursuing by the Court were recommended

conversion to the system is what conversion to Popery is in the eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff. It procures a plenary indulgence for all past transgressions, and gives a passport to those happy regions where favour and dignities are showered down with a more profuse hand on the Repentant, than on the Elect themselves, who never transgressed.

Great as the services were, which Lord Shelburne rendered the Cabal, and timely as was the use which they were enabled to make of his name, they soon consented to sacrifice him. His power was but of a day. There was That in his character, which even They could not trust. Besides, he had brought into power with him a rival for their favour, whom a peculiarity of situation, and a nearer study of his character, on his coming into office, pointed out to them as particularly entitled to their predilection.—It is unnecessary to tell you, that the person I mean was Mr. William Pitt, the present First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

This young Gentleman came into life under more favourable circumstances than, perhaps, ever fell to the lot of a public man. A very early expectation had been formed of him by his friends, and the first display of his eloquence in Parliament fully answered that expectation. He began by employing that eloquence in promoting the best interests of his country. He took an active and decided part in the measures for lessening the influence of the Crown in the House of Commons, and was one of those who exerted themselves with the greatest success in spurring the House against the American war.

Having in that important contest confessed the general idea of his abilities, it remained for him to chase his road to that height of power which he publicly professed from

commended by him. His family and dependants are loaded with places, and the very nature and tenure of an office is changed, that his brother might be gratified by it.

his place in Parliament, could alone satisfy his ambition—An ambition that disdained all *subordinate* employment; an ambition, flattered into a persuasion that it possessed that knowledge from nature, which long and toilsome experience alone gives to other men. He was told he was born a Statesman: he believed it, and determined in consequence to vault all at once into those high stations which, before the present times, none could hope to attain but by length of services, and unremitting labour in the public cause.

In the change that immediately succeeded Lord North's resignation, he stood detached from all parties. He lay on his arms as it were, to see the event of the dissensions which the parts that composed that change must, he knew, in a very short time produce. He saw that there were two ways that might lead him to that height of power which he avowed to be his object. One was to embrace the popular Party, the other to devote himself to the Crown.—But the popular party had long been led by the greatest talents and abilities that had ever graced this or any other country. The unrivalled powers of Mr. Fox, joined to his well-earned popularity—to the great supports he drew with him among the most independent characters in the kingdom—to the services he had rendered to the people, and the repeated sacrifices he had made of place and emolument to their interests, precluded every hope this young man could have formed of being raised by the people the first post in their service. Acting, therefore, in the same cause with Mr. Fox, he must ever act a subordinate part; and to a subordinate part he had not scrupled to assert he would ever disdain to descend.

But from the side of the Court the prospect was very different. The Cabal, broken and dispirited, baffled hitherto in all its attempts, plunged almost into despair at the disappointment of its hope from the American war—left without a leader in the House of Commons, and obliged

to consign its interest in the Cabinet to a person*, on whom it was not possible to place any reliance;—all this concurrence of favourable circumstances determined him in his choice, and an opportunity soon presented itself for declaring that choice to the public.

The death of Lord Rockingham was instantly followed by the appointment of Lord Shelburne to the Treasury. Mr. Fox and Lord John Cavendish resigned. The Duke of Portland withdrew himself from the Government of Ireland. Mr. Pitt, triumphing in his foresight, shone out all at once Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Minister of the House of Commons.

An office of such magnitude and importance to the State, requiring such a variety and extent of abilities, such consummate experience, so universal a knowledge of the resources of the country in every branch of commerce and finance, had never before been entrusted but to the most tried, approved, and matured talents. Here it was abandoned to the youth and inexperience of a person, who had scarcely attained to the age of manhood. His illustrious father, one of the most successful and able Ministers this nation was ever blessed with, laid the foundation of his own glory, and of that of his country, by learning to bear the yoke in his youth. Great and commanding as his talents appeared from his first entering the House of Commons, he thought an unremitting application of years amply rewarded, when at the age of forty he was made Paymaster General;—a place that called for no ministerial abilities, that entitled him to no confidence, and which this great man considered merely as a higher school, wherein he might prepare himself for the great offices to which he was afterwards called by his country.

The same may be said of every great character, who in the course of time, has filled these high departments in

* Lord S—

the State. We may except, perhaps, one instance.— Lord Bolingbroke, in times of faction, like the present, when the friends of the House of Hanover were removed from the Administration, and when a private Cabal, despising and setting at defiance the Resolutions of Parliament, and the general sense of the nation, was planning in *the closet* the subversion of the Constitution, by the restoration of the Stuarts; in such a time Lord Bolingbroke was made Secretary of State at the age of twenty-two. But that insatuated nobleman fell an early victim to the flattery of his sycophants, to his own presumptuous confidence in his abilities, (great, certainly, as Mr. Pitt, or any other man ever possessed) and to his impatient and boundless ambition, the cause of freedom triumphed.— He was driven into exile, and after owing his recal and the restoration of his honours to the mercy of his Prince, and the kindness of Providence, he spent the remainder of his days in obscurity; opposing, in his political publications, the government of his Prince, and, in his philosophical works, blaspheming his God.

The station, however, which Lord Bolingbroke filled, was a subordinate station compared to that which Mr. Pitt had seized, and with which, however, he was not satisfied. One step more remained for him to ascend, and the increasing favour of the Cabal, and the circumstances of the times shewed it to him at no great distance.

The negotiations for a general peace were pushed forward by Lord Shelburne, with the most impolitic rashness and precipitancy. Notwithstanding our successes in the West Indies, during the last campaign of the war; notwithstanding the total and fortunate change that had been effected in the management of our fleets; notwithstanding the increasing distresses of the enemy, and the ruined state of their finances, yet concessions and sacrifices were made to them, which nothing but absolute despair should have made us submit to. Whole provinces and islands, were voluntarily prof-

proffered to them by the weakness and folly, or given up the ruinous ignorance of the agents employed by the Minister at Paris. A spirit of shame, indignation, and resentment, rose in consequence among all ranks of people, and there appeared a general alacrity and concurrent desire in all parties, to select the Earl of Shelburne, as a victim of atonement to the nation.

The very first to abandon and sacrifice him were the creatures of the Cabal. He had served their turn, as I have before observed to you, and they had found a much more efficient instrument, to whose ambition they gladly sacrificed him.

We all recollect well the circumstances. So great was their anxiety and eagerness to bring Mr. Pitt forward, on the resignation of Lord Shelburne, that he was himself obliged to restrain their ardour, and to direct their proceedings. For upwards of six weeks the kingdom was kept in a state of the most alarming doubt and anxiety. Public business was totally suspended—the most pressing exigencies of the State were postponed and neglected—an interregnum, fatal to every domestic and foreign interest, was suffered to overwhelm us with grief and dejection, until such time as the struggle between the impatience of the secret advisers of the Crown, and the caution and prudence of their new associate, could be adjusted.

They urged and goaded him to an immediate acceptance of the Ministry, and at one time he had given way to their importunities. But on cooler reflection he retracted his consent, and his wiser plan was adopted. He clearly foresaw the storm that threatened every Minister, who, at such a crisis, should undertake the public Councils. The state of our affairs in the East Indies had been recommended from the Throne to the earliest consideration. The boldest Ministers, and they who were most firmly secured in their seats, had shrunk, for years, from an object of such infinite risk and difficulty. Even his illustrious father, in the plenitude of his power, had trembled to look

at it. But it was now brought to that point, that at all events and hazards it must be fully entered into and finally adjusted. Weighty taxes were to be imposed on the public to clear off the incumbrances of the war, and no Minister, however popular, could hope to propose them without risking his popularity. These, with many other considerations, equally promising, he urged, as decisive reasons for giving way for the present, and waiting for the favourable opportunity, which such circumstances could not fail of offering to gratify their wishes.

The reluctance with which the Cabal yielded, even to the justness of this reasoning, is not surprising, when you consider the Cabinet which was formed on Mr. Pitt's final determination, not to accept the Treasury. A Cabinet pointed out to them by the House of Commons, and supported by an union of all the great and leading interest there.—A Cabinet formed upon principle, upon mutual confidence, without one suspicious person from whom they could apprehend any seeds of dissention or division, or one to whom the Cabal could venture to intrust their interests, or apply to for support.—A Cabinet composed of men who were chiefly indebted for their power to the popular favour.—United in themselves, trusted and supported abroad.—A Cabinet, in short, such as had not been seen since the death of the Second George, and which the subvertors of the measures of that and the preceding reign could not behold without the utmost abhorrence.

Their aversion to consent to the formation of this Cabinet could only be equalled by their eagerness to destroy it after it had been formed. Every day's experience confirmed their despair of being able to break it by intestine suspicions or discord, and this despair drove them to embrace the first slight pretext of attack that presented itself to their impatience.

This pretext they took from the proposal of an establishment for the Heir to the Crown. A proposal which had

originated from the purest regard for the dignity of the Royal Family, and the wisest maxims of *true substantial* economy. But the *policy* of the establishment was never brought into consideration. It bore an appearance of unnecessary profusion; and the old arts of falsehood and misrepresentation were practised to spread a general alarm. But the pretext was too slight, and the attempt too precipitate. The prudence of their young favourite again interfered. Concessions, as abject as the provocations had been unjust and insulting, were made to the Administration, and matters were suffered to lead on gradually to that period which, if you are wanting to yourselves, must finally establish their power on the subversion and ruin of the Constitution. You already know, that I allude to the business of Mr. Fox's East India Bill, and the extraordinary transactions, which introduced and succeeded its defeat in the House of Lords. But having thus traced the system of private favouritism and Secret Influence, from its first origin, to a period, which, it flatters itself, must secure it final success, I shall resume this subject in my next letter.

A FREEHOLDER.

